

Core Team/Stakeholders Committee Meeting

State Resource Strategy Meeting

February 18, 2010

Idaho Panhandle National Forests Supervisor's Office

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Attendees

Coeur d'Alene:

- Steve Kimball, Idaho Department of Lands
- Dave Stephenson, Idaho Department of Lands
- Jill Cobb, USDA Forest Service- Idaho Panhandle NF- and IDL, Note Taker
- Cindy Lane, Forest Service- Clearwater-Nez Perce NF
- Kim Golden, Panhandle Lakes R C& D and NRCS
- Ara Andrea, NRCS State Advisory Committee and IDL
- Serena Carlson, Intermountain Forest Association
- Ed Warner, Idaho Department of Lands – Forest Legacy Program
- Kurt Mettler, Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- Mary Fritz, Idaho Department of Lands
- Jeff Handle, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

Moscow:

- John Degroot, Nez Perce Tribe
- Steve Hollenhorst, University of Idaho
- Ree Brannon, Clearwater RC and D

Boise:

- Bob Unnash, The Nature Conservancy
- Greg Servheen, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

The focus for today's meeting is the Palouse Area, St. Joe and Clearwater Areas, and the Montana Bitterroot Divide Area. Tomorrow's meeting will focus on the Craig Camas and West Central Idaho areas.

The goal for today's meeting was to continue work on the State Resource Strategy- this effort to identify the highest protection and restoration needs in Idaho across ownerships. The Core team will develop strategies that will help restore key systems. Steve reviewed the process for developing the Resource Strategy. The target for completing the strategy is mid-June. To meet this timeline, we will need to work from existing plans and use existing information from groups and agencies.

Steve reviewed the proposed outline for the Idaho State Resource Strategy document. Within the document, we'll highlight building and supporting partnerships and collaborative groups. The document will be iterative, updated periodically. Used effectively, the Strategy will be a means of coordinating and leveraging limited funding sources for important work in Priority Areas. Steve announced his departure for a new position in Alaska. Steve and Dave are working to bring in some writer-editing assistance to help complete the Strategy by June.

Steve reviewed the January 28th meeting notes. During the meeting, we discussed the Northern Panhandle and Coeur d'Alene River Areas. While we did make headway at the meeting, it seems as though we spent much of the time simply listing existing plans (about 20 plans) and further contacts to make. Steve reminded the group that we need to go further than listing existing plans and identify key strategies for the next five years.

Steve reviewed assignments from the January 28th meeting:

County Wildfire Protection Plans: Craig Glazier has completed mapping priorities from the Panhandle County Plans.

State Parks: Jeff Handel checked on the northern Parks... no new activities

Forest Assessment Mgt Plan and CWE: Ara did a great job summarizing her effort.

Watershed Advisory Group: Jill contact the group about their plans and strategies.

Private Forestry Groups: Serena will contact these groups. Serena requested that Steve and Dave provide some briefings for groups.

Cindy Lane noted that some collaborative groups may need to rewrite their missions to allow design for projects across ownerships. The group discussed the applicability of the FLRA (Federal Landscape Restoration Act) grants as an opportunity for funding.

NRCS : Frank and Steve still to make contacts and review plans. Frank will talk to Janet Hall

Forest Stewardship Plans. Ara will review these, looking for Strategies in the Panhandle area.

Steve and Tim: Department of Transportation contacts still need to be made.

Urban Forestry: Tim still to make these contacts.

County Contacts for Northern Panhandle: Steve will make these contacts.

RC and D: Frank will discuss with Kim Golden. Need to clarify the difference between NRC S and RC and D plans/strategies. There is a separate plan for the R C and D- annual Strategic Plan. Kim and Ree will review the documents and will point out key strategies.

Priest Community Forest Connection: Mary Fritz will make this contact.

Steve will contact tribal representatives.

Summary of assignments: We all still have work to do to finish up assignments. Steve reminded us that for each plan, we're looking for a summary of their planned strategies for the next five years.

Palouse Review:

Dave Stephenson provided a review of the Palouse area and highlighted primary concerns from the Assessment effort. The group responded with a listing of ongoing planning and collaborative efforts within the Palouse Priority Area.

- County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP): Latah County is focusing upon Moscow Mountain, Troy and Deary. The Latah working group recently submitted a western states grant to fund fuel treatments.
- Benewah County is included in the priority area, but we don't have actual plans for this county yet. The county is working near St. Maries.
- The Clearwater National Forest and tribes are doing Redd surveys
- This area is referred to as the "Heart of the White Pine Ecosystem" and is very important to Forest Service. Within the upcoming IPNF Forest Plan Vegetation section, there will likely be broad scale strategies to address this unique area.
- Ree said that she will obtain a list of assessments. Fisheries plans for anadromous fish, weed management plans.
- Cindy suggested that we consider the Palouse Cooperative Weed Plan. Ree will review that plan. Ree will contact Soil and Water Conservation District in the Palouse as well to extract strategic ideas.
- Kurt discussed the fuel break near St. Maries. The tribal fish and water programs are active in Lake Creek and Hangman Creeks. There is ongoing fuel work in the Plummer Butte Area. When working around agricultural fields there needs to be an extra effort to avoid burning up adjacent tree stands.
- Ara suggested the group consider the Lake Management Plan.
- Jill asked group to send bibliography of plans to Steve for inclusion in the strategy.
- Dave reemphasized that we discuss strategies....not actions. What are the broad strategies that help us address the plan's identified needs. Identifying the actual types of actions would be examples of responses. Some good examples of possible strategies are: fuel breaks around communities, restoring tributaries, and identifying areas where weed treatments are prioritized.
- For the Palouse Area watershed strategies: Ree will contact Waters of the West at the University and Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee. Ree will also contact Meg Foltz of the Palouse RD for a TMDL watershed plan
- Clearwater Economic Development Group is looking for opportunities to build and sustain forest markets. Ree will contact them.
- Cindy received a comment suggesting we include a strategy to enhance the biomass market infrastructure. Ree was aware of that need.

- Bob is working with Clearwater Collaborative, but no plans are currently in place. Cindy said she heard that the tribe is working on fisheries recovery for the Potlatch River John said he was not aware of those plans, but would check.

Steve asked if there were concerns in the corridor between Lewiston and Orofino. Response is that yes there are riparian issues, especially hardwood issues. Is the tribe comfortable with the designation areas? John said the tribe is comfortable. The tribe has restoration plans for the riparian corridor, especially fuel treatments.

Regarding Urban forestry: Ree says there is an Urban Forestry plan in Moscow. We should ask Mike Bowman about highlights in this Plan. The group is not sure if there is an Urban Forestry Plan for St. Maries. The Fuels for Schools program is underway in St. Maries but the school is only burning pellets. Chuck Mark may know more. Ashley McFarland from U of I may know more about Urban Forestry in St. Maries.

Fire Safe in Benewah County plans will be incorporated.

Suggestion by Mary Fritz to contact both Robert Barkely and Steve Kaball IDL Managers FPA and Service Forestry specialists for private forestry for IDL. No person was assigned this task.

Steve said he and Dave will start filling out matrices prior to the March 8th meeting.

St Joe-Clearwater Review:

Review of the St. Joe Clearwater Area

Why is this high priority area? Primarily because of water, air, fuels, elk and other wildlife species. This area has a series of well-integrated values at risk including: wildfire, weeds, fuel reduction, job creation, fire monitoring, thinning fuels and managing elk. Need consensus management on Federal Lands. The groups need funding to support note takers and facilitators for their collaboration efforts. They have clearly stated that they don't need any more data.

The water bodies included in this analysis include the Lochsa, Dworshak Reservoir, North Fork, South Fork and the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River. A question was raised as to whether or not the St. Joe River is included. Would it make sense to include the St. Joe with Clearwater because of similar issues? Bob suggested filling in the physical gaps between the St. Joe and the Clearwater. Reason we didn't include the gaps was because those gaps were not high priority areas. Still, Greg wanted to make sure Floodwood was in the priority area. Need to adjust area boundary to include ENTIRE Floodwood and Forest Capitol checkerboard. Need to explain what is included and what is excluded. This job was tasked to Steve and Dave.

Existing Efforts, Plans and Collaborative in St Joe and Clearwater Priority Area

- Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark
- Clearwater & Nez Perce Forest Plans (1987)

- Clearwater & Nez Perce Forest Plan Revision
- Northwest Passage Corridor Mgt Plan (2005)
- Selway & Middle Fork Clearwater Subbasin Assessment
- South Fork Clearwater Subbasin Assessment
- Lochsa Corridor Assessment
- Fire History Information (Barrett)
- Crapo Elk Initiative
- BLM River Mgt Plans
- Cooperative Weed Management Plans/Strategies (Palouse, Clearwater, Upper Clearwater)
- Existing collaborative – Clearwater Basin Collaborative
- North Central Idaho Resource Advisory Council
- Clearwater and Water Conservation Strategy. Ree will contact.
- The Tribe has a hatchery within the Clear Creek basin. John says he is not familiar with that plan.
- Federal Landscape Restoration Act (FLRA) is the highest priority in Clear Creek
- Trail efforts:
 - North South Trail Plan: Avery to Illusion Creek and up to Canada.
 - Motorized Trails
 - Rails to Trails
 - Equestrian
 - Mountain Bike
 - Snowmobile.

The Clearwater Basin Collaborative group was surveyed by Cindy. That group wants to see the draft after completion. The Clearwater Basin Collaborative asked about priority areas and possible management plans. The travel management plans of the two forests will have a large effect.

The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program plan is ongoing in Clear Creek. Looking at 1.4 million acres right now. The goals of the project are not yet finalized but will be in the next month. Cindy will have access to this plan in March. This effort adjoins private land and includes State lands and is trying to integrate the Resource Strategy out of Region 1. Two other subbasin assessments are under way: Selway and Middle fork Clearwater subbasin assessments. The focus of this group is Federal Ground in the WUI.

What concerns could we have missed in the St. Joe and Clearwater?

- We need to focus attention to non-impacted acres.
- Look for opportunities to save ground from getting impacted.
- There seems to be a disconnect with water quality. Could we highlight good watersheds versus impacted watersheds.
- Address salmonid recovery and dams.

What are the opportunities in the St. Joe and Clearwater in the next five years?

- Communication and coordination across ownerships
- Coordinated management plans
- Forest Treatments using prescribed fire in White pine and white bark pine
- Road system maintenance and restoration with emphasis on Aquatic Organism Passage
- Thinning in seral relics emphasis on dry types
- Look at River breaks and reduce decadent brush with chainsaws
- Need to develop a structure to help facilitate the development of Collaboratives to initiate projects across property boundaries

What are the restoration Needs for the St. Joe Clearwater Area?

- Create defensible space around WUI where values at risk are high
- Return fire to its natural regime on the landscape
- Improve forest health (I&D issues, reduce stocking)
- Restore western WP ecosystem
- Restore early seral, more fire tolerant spp (WL, WP,PP) that is consistent with climate change drying predictions
- Balance the stand age classes on the landscape
- Regenerate brushfields
- Improve watershed /aquatic conditions
- Restore landscapes at “ecological risk” – high elevation/ breaklands/ low elevation dry sites
- Remove off-site species (i.e. Black Hills pine) that is not appropriate on these landscapes (Highway 12/Bimmerick)
- Maintain public access and infrastructure (roads and trails) for economic activities as well as recreational opportunities
- Reduce weed spread
- Restore anadromous fisheries to historic locations and numbers
- Restore elk populations
- Create jobs/restore forest resource industry

What funds can be leveraged in the St. Joe Clearwater Area?

- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Arbor Day Foundation
- American Forests Foundation
- National Forest Foundation
- RAC \$\$
- Tribe & BPA \$\$
- Id State Dept of Agriculture
- State & Private \$\$
- Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program

- Stewardship contracting
- Disaster & Emergency Response/local fire dept (in kind for planning)

Idaho County Commissioner Thoughts

- Want Motorized access to be maintained.
- Look at updating culverts and weight limits. Biggest priority is road work, trying to leverage RAC dollars with Hwy District money. The County doesn't support funding any additional studies. Want to work collaboratively to get work done.
- Be prepared to discuss strategy with elected officials at time of draft.
- Commissioners would like strategies to support more road work, trail work, noxious weed eradication and additional timber harvests.
- Other forested areas that need extra attention are the South Fork near Elk City, Orogrande, and Dixie. These are Wildland Urban Interface areas and are important also for wildlife and forest health. This is politically sensitive and large sums of dollars are spent here to fight fire. Restoration of vegetation (dying LP and DF) is a high priority.
- There is a real need to have balanced forest management.
- Consider working of creating Collaboratives with both the Rocky Mtn Elk Foundation and the Wild Turkey Federation.
- No more studies and develop integrated plans.
- Commissioners think that the aquatic resources trumps everything else and that should not be the case.
- Suggests review of the BLM River Management Plan is an additional strategy that needs to be reviewed.

Forest Service Interviews

Very few Forest Service staff were aware of the State Assessment effort. Suggestions from the FS Staff include the following:

- Look at Forest Plan Revisions.
- Use University of Idaho Resources
- Consider existing Biomass facilities in Elk City, Grangeville, Lewiston, Plummer and University of Idaho. Develop Biomass infrastructure in Orofino and elsewhere in the Clearwater Basin
- Primary concern is to treat fuels in the WUI and encourage private property participation. Slashing, planting, species conversion for resistant trees, values at risk.
- Look for additional funding to leverage National Forest Foundation.
- Explore maximizing BPA money through tribal collaboration
- FS suggested that we invest in LIDAR technology.
- Forest Service suggests that the data layers did not represent issues. The data did not honestly represent the dry site issues associated with the South Fork and Salmon River Canyon. These areas need treatment to focus on stand thinning, conversion of the forests to more fire resistant species and extensive weed treatment.

- A major constraining issue is Pac Fish.
- In next five years, develop and implement a restoration project for Clear Creek/Middle Fork Clearwater that illustrates collaboration, integration and a balanced approach
- The Stateline area has high fire danger. Any fire management opportunities on the Clearwater will be strongly affected by smoke management issues in the Bitterroot Valley.
- Commercial and pre-commercial thinning (reduce fuels/utilize biomass)
- Plant White Bark Pine and western WP– at risk ecosystems
- Harvest and plant to convert species mix as well as achieve age class distribution
- Slash cleanup on private
- Harvest, some if it expensive helicopter in WUI areas
- Creation of fuel breaks and increased use of prescribed fire
- Riparian area planting to reduce stream temperature
- Continue to decommission old jammer roads to improve watersheds and reduce maintenance backlogs
- Site specific planning across ownerships in WUI on tactics to improve fire protection
- Creation of wash stations at state boundaries to reduce noxious weed spread (Lolo Pass)
- Utilize an integrated approach of herbicides, biocontrol and mechanical means to treat weeds
- Travel Management
- Elk City is attempting to develop bio-energy.....how was that consideration accounted for?
- Checkerboard ownership in Upper Lochsa creates challenges for weed treatments, road decommissioning, fire fighting, riparian restoration not to mention the potential creation of additional WUI
- Native plants are being choked out by cheatgrass – shifting fire interval?
- Weed data layer used in assessment was poor representation of Clearwater area
- Elk River has a municipal watershed that is being damaged by excessive recreation and fuel buildup. Need recognition of impact to get assistance
- Highway 12 corridor is a primary transportation route across the State which could easily be negatively affected by fire
- FS needs to modify how treats riparian buffers as PACFISH is creating “wicks” of vegetation that are not “fire resistant” – need to move away from a “prescriptive distance” to a more ecologically based approach
- How do we preserve highly intact watersheds versus focusing only on already impacted ones?
- Salmonids – habitat vs dams

Wildland Urban Interface fire priority

- WUI is very important in Clearwater County especially around Dworshack Dam because of the dispersed recreation, campfires and lightning strikes.
- In Idaho County, the WUI is most important near the Salmon River breaks around Dixie. There are opportunities to work closely with the Nez Perce Reservation.
- Clearwater River corridor is a high priority area for fire treatment. Foresters suggest that the fuel treatments lead to species conversion.

- Ara highlighted the Stewardship project near Elk City and said that we need to discuss some successes.
- Is there strategic guidance for smoke management ? Is smoke really an area-specific issue or is it more a statewide issue? Steve will work with Craig Glazier to refine.

Habitat and Wildlife Plan Efforts

- Subbasin Plans with Northwest Power and Conservation Plans have a fisheries and fire emphasis.
- Greg Servheen recommended talking to the Nez Perce Tribe to get information. Possible tribal contacts are Dave Johnson or Ira Jones. John will follow up and help us make contact with the Nez Perce tribe.
- Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan Bitterroot Ecosystem Plan. Could we keep our review of the recovery plan basic enough to insure consistency with strategies? Look at what strategies might strongly affect the habitat (i.e. aspen stand regeneration).
- Will we address forested ecosystems at Risk?
- Land Trust has worked in St. Joe drainage for cabin host sites.
- The Clearwater Corridor is a priority and current conservation easements are vitally important. Steve Hollenhorst will get a list for additional easements. Groups are looking at existing corporate forest lands as a source for easement lands. This is especially relevant to the St. Joe. In the upper Clearwater, where there are checkerboard ownerships that are ripe for land trusts.
- Palouse Land Trust focuses on this area and Nature Conservancy and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundations.
- Currently, we do not address corporate timber lands in the State Assessment
- Fish recovery in the Priority Area is important. In the St. Joe and the the Clearwater, the emphasis is on Bull Trout Recovery. In the Clearwater, they also are strong with Steelhead habitat enhancement. We need a list of strategies and no one named specific fish strategies for the area.
- Other driving issues for this area are water quality, water quantity and aquatic connectivity.
- The ongoing Snake River Basin Adjudication may affect our Strategies.
- Discusses Elk Recovery and the Crapo Elk Initiative. Cindy will see how and if this initiative is being successful for elk recovery.
- What are the Wild and Scenic River designation for the area? Cindy will check with Heather Berg in Orofino for additional information.

Bitterroot Divide

Existing Strategies/Plans/Collaborative Efforts

- Clearwater Forest Plan (1987)
- Geographic Area Summaries developed as part of the Forest Plan Revision
- Clearwater Basin Collaborative

Restoration Needs:

- Restore Ecosystems at Risk: White Bark Pine
- Prevent weed spread between states by treating weeds with an integrated approach
- Be proactive with restoration efforts
- Rehabilitate streams/roads and vegetation in intermixed ownerships
- Large landscape is threatened with bark beetles

Priority Work:

- Develop defensible space around communities and structures
- Weed spraying
- Create weed wash stations to reduce spread of weeds, especially near Lolo Pass
- Use prescribed fire
- Harvest timber
- Plant White Bark Pine

Possible funds to leverage:

- RMEF
- Stewardship Contracting

Identified Community Needs:

- Funds to help facilitate collaborative efforts
- Increase understanding of smoke management on Montana

Specific Thoughts regarding the Bitterroot Divide

- Mixed ownership in the upper headwaters is a concern. The Checkboard ownership may result in loss of working forests, added difficulty for restoration work and an increased cost for fire fighting.
- Worried about losing working forests and the threat of wildfires.
- Bark Beetle is moving across state line from Montana to Idaho.
- Fires are moving from Idaho to Montana.
- The County Weed supervisor is developing strategies to keep weeds out of travel corridor.
- Bob asked Greg about the importance of the Bitterroot for large mammals, (especially grizzly bears). Greg responded that all forest management strategies need to consider connectivity issues. There is a heightened concern with the adverse effects of dwindling White Bark Pine Ecosystems on Grizzly Bear populations.
- Aspen Ecosystem is another concern but not so much in Bitterroot.

Close of the Meeting

Steve reserved the conference room in the IPNF SO for tomorrow morning, starting at 9:00 am. Steve will be at Moscow and attend remotely. Craig Glazier will be at Supervisor's Office. Tomorrow we will discuss Craig Camas, Hells Gate and West Central priority areas.

Notes recorded by Jill Cobb

Edited by: Steve Kimball